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WAY BACK WHEN: FIRST X-RATED MOVIE IN SANTA BARBARA?

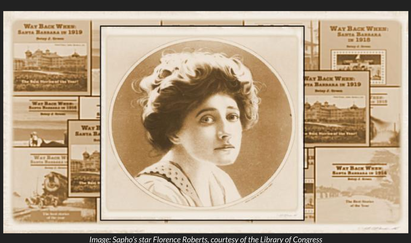

Image: Sapho's star Florence Roberts, courtesy of the Library of Congress

LOCAL HISTORY / AUG 29 2020 09:00 AM / BYBJGREEN / 4 COMMENTS / READS 1839

By Besty J. Green

The Hollywood rating system had not been invented yet, but in July 1914, the Mission Theater on State Street was not allowing unaccompanied minors to view the four-reel movie *Sapho*. (Among other things, the main character has a child out of wedlock.)

This restriction was in spite of the fact that the paper noted that "the censorship board has eliminated all objectionable features . . . there is nothing of the objectionable character in the play. Many of Santa Barbara's leading citizens saw the play last night and no one was heard to criticize it."

Betsy's Way Back When book -- 1919 -- is now available in local bookstores and at Amazon.com. This is the sixth book in her series of the history of Santa Barbara, one year at a time. Learn more at betsyjgreen.com.

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4 COMMENTS

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First Commented

A-1598723896 AUG 29, 2020 10:58 AM REPLY

Oolala, where can we see a clip of this "risqué" film?

BJGREEN AUG 29, 2020 12:57 PM REPLY

Sadly, in answer to your question, this film is among the lost films that did not survive.

SBCACTUS AUG 29, 2020 02:47 PM REPLY

Brought back memory of trying to get into my first X-Rated movie in 1972 at Magic Lantern Theatre in IV - Fritz the Cat - I figured they'd be cool & let me in - nope!

A-1598800939 AUG 30, 2020 08:22 AM REPLY

Am recalling when a newcomer teacher long ago commented how surprising it was how her young students mentioned looking forward to going to the Mission. She didn't know about the Mission theater.

Your comment has been posted.

VVORKER AUG 30, 2020 08:42 AM REPLY

We owned the video rental shop on mission st, and had X-rated tapes, which helped pay the rent..Kinda Ironic that our most popular series was titled "Barley Legal..." Kinda the perfect metaphor for our town.
When Hal was mayor, he would rent one occasionally at lunch and have it back in our drop box by 1pm, now that is a way to let the steam off...Wonder what Cathy is doing for Lunch these days?

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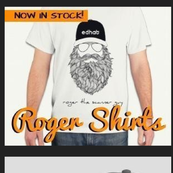

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